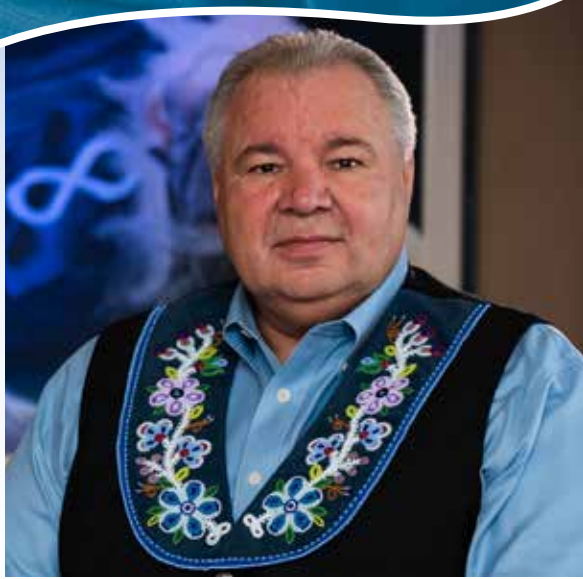




Le Métis

President's Message



As you may have heard, the federal government tabled its budget. Built by the federal Department of Finance and usually released early in the year, the budget is a blueprint for how the Canadian government sets the annual economic agenda for Canada.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has stated more than once since he was first elected in 2015 that there is no more important relationship for his government than the one between Canada and its Indigenous peoples.

I have spent decades advocating for recognition of the importance of this relationship, so it's been tremendous to see it take shape as we grow our nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada. What that means is that we work with the Government of Canada to tell them what supports are needed for our Citizens. Those recommendations are made based on the feedback we hear from Citizens, from leadership in the regions and from the grassroots leaders in the locals, as well as from our Elders, Youth, and our shared knowledge within the Cabinet of the Manitoba Metis Federation.

This process has allowed us to provide support for post-secondary education and the home buyer's and home repair programs, just to name a few. We've also been able to support our Citizens through the challenges of COVID-19 through our hamper program for Elders and families and financial support for entrepreneurs and students who can't work or work fewer hours because of COVID-19 closures.

In the recent budget tabled by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, \$18 billion was allocated to Indigenous communities to help close the social and economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

This is great news for the Métis people, as we continue to be recognized by a Canadian government and take our rightful place in Canada's Confederation as one of the three Indigenous peoples. The Métis people are taxpaying citizens of Canada, so it makes sense that our tax dollars would benefit our Nation.

In this budget, we are actually seeing our tax dollars earmarked to go to work for our Nation and our Citizens. Our Métis Nation was referenced nearly 30 times in the budget document overall and featured in a dedicated section (page 270) called *Supporting Métis Nation Priorities*.

Some of the priorities noted in the *Supporting Métis Nation Priorities* section include:

- Access to the \$4.3-billion distinctions-based Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund;
- \$2.5 billion over five years to build on the existing distinctions-based approach to Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare – this gives us a chance to catch up to First Nations programming, which has been in place for many years;
- \$598 million over three years to support a distinctions-based mental wellness strategy; and
- \$64 million to help Indigenous entrepreneurs, including Indigenous women, access capital and business supports to start and grow their businesses.

It will take some time to understand what will be provided to the Métis Nation, First Nations, and Inuit peoples separately, and what will be available for us in Manitoba specifically. But there can be no doubt that this is an encouraging budget. I will continue to advocate for our Métis Nation and ensure the allocations for our province are fair and appropriate.

It will allow us to keep working on some of the priorities we've already established, like broadband for our rural and remote villages, investing to end the ongoing cycle of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, reclaiming our Michif language, supporting entrepreneurs, and mental health, along with jobs in the economy for Youth starting their careers.

While there is no direct support in this budget for a distinctions-based healthcare strategy for Métis Nation, your Métis Government will continue to invest in healthcare for our Citizens, by hiring doctors and nurses and finding innovative ways to deliver health programming to our Citizens across Manitoba. We will also continue to work with the federal Liberal government on distinctions-based healthcare legislation for our people.

There is much more to come as we dig deeper into this federal budget, but I'm excited about what we'll be able to do for our Nation in the coming years. We are truly beginning to see the head start we were promised in the 1800s when we created the province of Manitoba. I look forward to sharing more information with you all and hearing about what you need from your Métis Government.

Until we can be together again, I encourage everyone to stay safe at home, and take the COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes available to you, as I did with my recent first dose of AstraZeneca. If you're concerned or have questions, you should definitely talk to your doctor before you get it.

Our Métis Nation has done so well protecting and looking after each other, our Elders, and vulnerable Citizens. But with the COVID-19 variant cases growing quickly, we need to keep up the hard work of staying safe.

I offer my prayers to all our Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve.

President David Chartrand, LL.D. hon. Q.M. 

Cart crafting leads to cultural connection

About a decade ago, Elder Linda St. Cyr-Saric and husband Vinko took part in a traditional Métis journey from Emerson to St. Norbert.

One of the Elders taking part in the sojourn crafted Red River cart replicas, which caught Vinko's eye.

"He started, he made a prototype and then he made another one, but they didn't quite work out. The basket was too small for the wheel," Elder St. Cyr-Saric said in a recent phone interview. "I still have them downstairs, actually. They're kind of funny looking."

However, after consulting with former Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) employee Jim Jerome, Vinko learned the proper proportions and his abilities quickly improved. Fast forward to the present day and the pair is taking orders for the carts from clients as diverse as daycares, teachers, politicians, and the Louis Riel Institute, an MMF affiliate — which ordered 500 — and are fulfilling them from their Stonewall home.

The exquisite craftsmanship means that the wheels take some time to get right, as each of the 12 spokes is set at a 10-degree angle within the dished wheel, a key feature that made the carts true all-terrain vehicles on the Prairies.

Vinko's interest and ability in constructing the carts initially came as somewhat of a surprise to Elder St. Cyr-Saric. Though he worked with his hands prior

to retirement, it was in a much different capacity as a Red Seal electronic technician for the Vale nickel mine in Thompson.

"The pendulum swung the other way," Elder St. Cyr-Saric chuckled.

The carts come in three different varieties based on wheel size: 12, eight, and six inches.

Elder St. Cyr-Saric noted that Vinko started off making the largest size before scaling down to smaller options.

"We decided that we're going to use up the leftover (materials) and make a smaller wheel," she said. "We're working our way down."

Vinko, now 75, came to Canada from Croatia as a 19-year-old. He was a miner in Thompson before shifting into electronic work. Now retired, he's spending a minimum of 30 hours each week constructing the carts.

The elapsed time it takes to finish each cart is 10 to 12 hours, though that includes time for the glue (which is used instead of sinew) to dry, and multiple carts can be completed in that time frame.

"He never makes just one. He makes parts for all of them," Elder St. Cyr-Saric said. "If we're working on 100 carts, he'll make enough parts to do those 100."

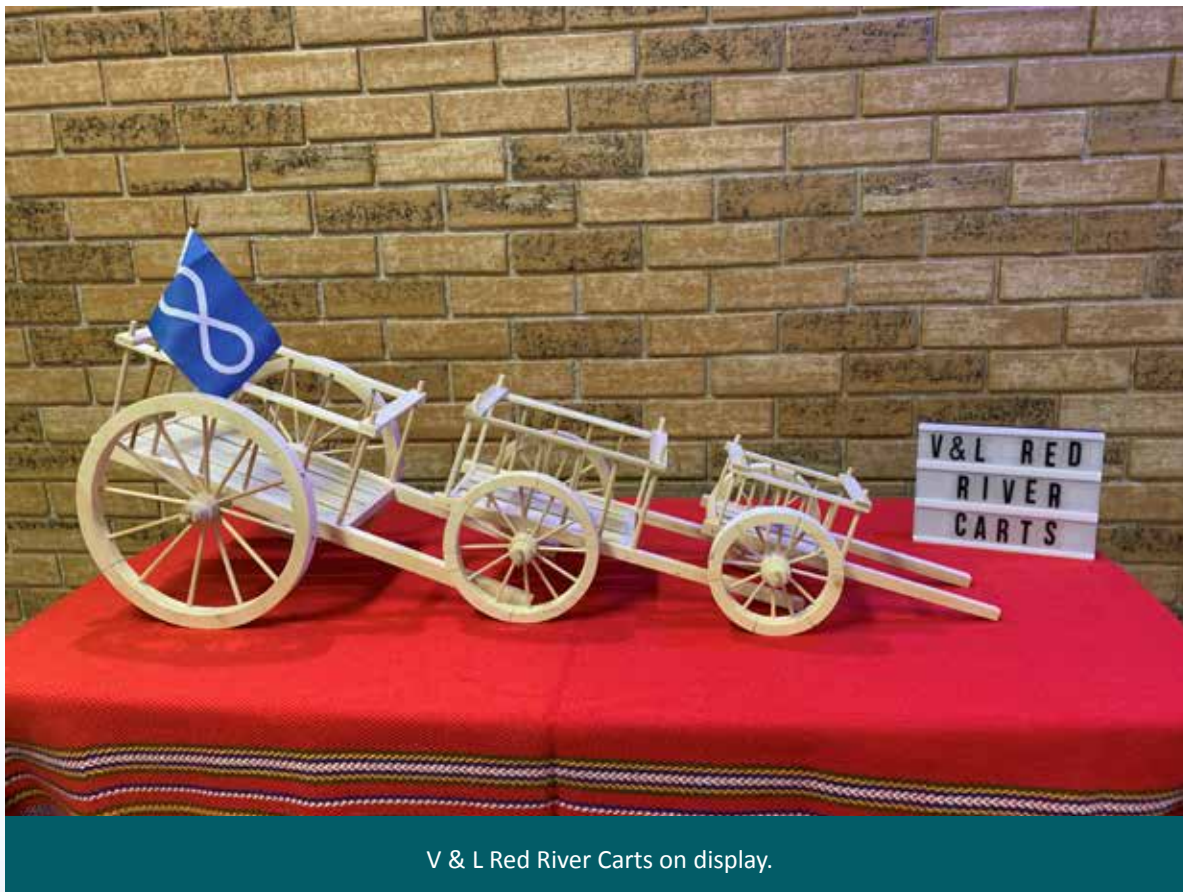
The wood used in the carts is "mostly pine," Elder St. Cyr-Saric explained, though they'll use fir on occasion if they get their hands on it.

A special feature of the large carts, Elder St. Cyr-Saric noted, is that Vinko will drill an extra hole in the basket to hold a blue Métis infinity flag. She noted that they often display the carts at the MMF's Annual General Assembly when it is held in person, adding that it's a special feeling to see attendees pay such close attention.

"By making these, it's a contribution, not only just as an Elder, but it's a contribution to my people," she said. "People really identify with that cart ... They have a sense of pride just looking at them."

The carts range in price from \$125 to \$150.

For more information, or to order, contact vsaric@shaw.ca.



V & L Red River Carts on display.



Vinko Saric hard at work creating replica Red River carts.

PSESP recipient Josh Swain awarded prestigious McCall MacBain scholarship



Josh Swain, a Métis Citizen who received funding from the Manitoba Metis Federation's (MMF) multi-million-dollar Post-Secondary Education Support Program (PSESP), has been awarded the prestigious McCall MacBain scholarship, which provides full funding to a master's or professional degree at McGill University. He is in his final year of his BSc in Biology at the University of Winnipeg, and has now been accepted to McGill to complete his Master of Science in Public Health.

Swain was one of 20 students chosen from 735 applicants for the scholarship, which involved a six-month process of applications, interviews, and enrichment sessions.

"Each of those students have proven they are incredible leaders in their communities, so to be named one of the scholars is overwhelming, and I feel so blessed," he said.

Mini AGA boosts the next generation

On the heels of the Manitoba Metis Federation's (MMF) first-ever virtual Annual General Assembly on March 27 and 28, the chatter actually kept going.

For two days after the adults gathered to discuss the state of the MMF — announcing new programs and initiatives while providing a recap of the latest fiscal year — it was the children's turn to listen as part of the Mini AGA on March 29 and 30.

The Mini AGA, which had the theme of Planting Seeds: Growing Community, was organized through the MMF's Homeschool Support Program, and had 90 children participate over Spring Break. It featured a wide range of activities, including virtual tours of the Manitoba Museum, a special instalment of *Meet Up with Mason*, and plenty of enjoyable activities centred around teaching participants how to connect with and care for the environment. The Mini AGA also helped the children tap into their cultural

In addition to funding from the PSESP, Swain received funding from the MMF's COVID-19 Emergency Student Assistance Program, and was a successful recipient of the Louis Riel Bursary through the University of Winnipeg for the 2020-21 year. He said the "incredible support" from the MMF and the Louis Riel Institute, its affiliate, has been vital to his success as a student.

"Not only does it help with the financial burden of university and of course the stress that comes from that, but also recognizing the hard work that Métis students are doing to help represent our people and create a strong future for the Métis Nation," he said.

Growing up in Kinosota, Man. with Métis parents, Swain said he always felt connected to his Métis heritage. "I have just always been and felt Indigenous and specifically Métis, and have been surrounded by Métis family and traditions and jigging and fiddle music," he said.

Once Swain entered university, where he dedicated a lot of his time to participating in and supporting Indigenous students in science, he said he started taking his activism and involvement in the Métis and Indigenous community a lot more seriously.

"That is where I met a really strong community of Indigenous students studying in different science fields, and we created a .caISES (Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society) chapter at the University of Winnipeg," said Swain, who is the chapter's Vice-President.

The chapter — which engages in traditional activities, fundraising, and supporting the University's

Indigenous student research programs — belongs to the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), whose mandate is to bring together Indigenous STEM students and professionals.

Swain is also a student mentor and instructor of biology for the University of Winnipeg's Pathways to Graduate Studies Program, an AISES Native Financial Cents Ambassador, and helps teach financial literacy to Indigenous youth.

For his MSc, he said he hopes to focus his attention on Indigenous health, especially at the sub-demographic level.

"I think unfortunately too often in Canada there is a habit of lumping all Indigenous people together when it comes to public health strategies. This has unfortunate consequences because most communities have their own public health needs, which are specific to each community. I'd really like to do some work on Métis health, and northern Indigenous communities, so that we have the data to come up with more comprehensive health strategies specific to each community's need," said Swain.

"I'd just like to say how proud I am to belong to our strong community, and how happy I am to get to represent Métis and Indigenous people in general by both being a part of this incredible McCall MacBain inaugural cohort, and to attend a world-renowned research institution such as McGill."

identity, encouraging traditional outdoor activities such as fishing.

The children learned all about what they could do as individuals to take ownership of the environment, such as recycling and composting. The final day saw them take it even a step further as they participated in an upcycled art class where they repurposed paper and other items from around the house to create something new.

Once the Mini AGA itself wrapped up, the participants were invited to take part in the Nature's Pathway Contest, described as an opportunity for them to not only reflect on what they had learned, but also to pass a message along to current decision makers of what they could do to support the next generation. The contest ran until April 9.

The creative children took the opportunity to pass along their message in a variety of ways, ranging from drawings to short stories to videos. Several incorporated the upcycling concept, using pictures from old magazines for a collage or pasting crumpled-up paper to a cardboard background to represent an overflowing garbage can or even attaching gold foil to a drawing to represent the sun and small bits of red foil to be pieces of fruit.

The overwhelming message from the children was how it's imperative to start taking action immediately to protect the Earth by stopping pollution and eliminating litter while taking positive steps such as planting trees and recycling.

MMF administers vaccines for vulnerable Citizens

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) was recently able to administer 100 vaccine doses to Métis Elders and vulnerable Citizens, and received another 100 doses from Long Plain First Nation for more Elders, vulnerable Citizens, and frontline staff.

Long Plain First Nation offered the MMF Moderna doses, which prompted the MMF to partner with them to create a vaccine clinic for Métis Citizens at Long Plain First Nation RexPlex on April 15, 2021. Elders and seniors in the Southwest Region, as well as frontline staff at the MMF Home Office, travelled to the clinic to receive the vaccine. Chief Dennis Meeches and his team were formally thanked on behalf of Métis Citizens who received the vaccine at Long Plain reserve.

In Winnipeg, the MMF Home Office unexpectedly received 100 doses of AstraZeneca from the province on April 6, 2021.

Thankfully, the MMF was planning ahead in case it received vaccines and tapping into its database of Elders and seniors enlisted in the MMF's Prescription Drug Program.

"We reviewed our Prescription Drug, Eye Glass and Metis Firewood Programs databases to contact our Elders and seniors to compile a list of candidates for the vaccines. We also utilize our COVID-19 Hamper Program's database, and our staff contact all of our Citizens in the program to do wellness checks to ensure they are OK. So we started asking, 'Did you get your COVID vaccine? Have you had COVID?' so we could keep our own database. So that's how we got our stats and our numbers," said Frances Chartrand, Minister of Health and Wellness.

The 100 AstraZeneca doses were administered to Métis Elders and vulnerable Citizens at the MEDOCare Pharmacy by April 17, 2021.



The MMF is uniquely poised to provide these services to its Citizens, as MMF staff continues to conduct wellness check on every Citizen who received a vaccine, and provided transportation and information to Citizens in need.

"They were thankful that the Métis Government was on hand to assist them," said Minister Chartrand, adding that Citizens are more comfortable receiving the vaccine from the MMF. "They know that we have their back, and we will continue to follow up and ensure they are OK."

Ninety-year-old Arthur Branconnier, the first Citizen to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine at MEDOCare Pharmacy on April 12, 2021, chose to come to the MMF to receive the vaccine over other clinics.

"I'm Métis, and I think that I kind of felt more relaxed at coming here and doing the vaccine, and I'm very pleased," he said, adding that he had been to the Home Office before.

"I would like to thank our President David Chartrand for the hard work he's been doing to help us to get these vaccines. We're so pleased, you know, that we could come and get the vaccines and stop this virus from spreading."

MMF President David Chartrand, who received his AstraZeneca shot on April 17, 2021, said the experience was quick and painless.

"It was important, as a leader, to show that I have faith in our federal vaccine protocols and show that AstraZeneca is a safe vaccine for eligible Citizens to take. If you're concerned about it, of course you should speak with a doctor. But we know that doctors, scientists, and epidemiologists have said this vaccine is safe – I put my trust in these experts," said President Chartrand.



"I encourage people to be brave and have the courage to get vaccinated to protect their families and Elders in the community, especially with the growing number of variants of concern in our province. Wear a mask, wash your hands, and keep social distance until it's safe to be together again."

The MMF has been trying for months to ensure Manitoba Métis Citizens are included in vaccine prioritization. The MMF is preparing for future province-wide clinics if additional doses become available.

Minister Chartrand recommended that the federal and provincial governments give the MMF a chance to have its own vaccine clinics, as the MMF knows the needs of its Métis Citizens. "We go right to the Local level and ask our Citizens what they need."

The MMF hopes to finalize second doses in about a month.

Community Photo

Le Metis' new Community Photo section invites Métis Citizens to send in photos to be featured in our newsletter. If you have a photo that celebrates the Métis Nation, send it to communications@mmf.mb.ca and you may see it in print!



Waiting for the beet to drop